

William J. Ward interviewed by Jaime Lopez

Jaime: This project is really based upon ... It comes from the idea that we have conversation about a job and we need electricians and we share each other's stories, get to know each other, create these friendships and have a great time and then some we split apart. Your journeyman leaves, you leave.

William: You are best friends for six months and then you don't see the guy for 12 years.

Jaime: [00:00:30] Right. You understand how [crosstalk 00:00:32]

William: oh my goodness, yeah.

Jaime: This is honoring that ... Honoring ... Those things get lost so this is, somehow, trying to preserve some of that.

William: Absolutely.

Jaime: Can you start off by saying your name and your job title?

William: My name is William Ward, I am electrical test technician with [inaudible 00:00:53] Services, local 3 IBEW. I guess you could [00:01:00] say I am a level four NETA certified test technician, so NETA, International Electrical Testing Association, is an identity organization that a lot of testing shops belong to that are involved in developing standards, practices for doing electrical testing and they have a certification process, so you take some tests and you move up the levels. I am a level four, senior certified NETA electrical test technician. I am actually [00:01:30] the only one in local three [crosstalk 00:01:32]

Jaime: ... going to come back to this?

William: No, I just want to talk about that. [crosstalk 00:01:37]

Jaime: ... I want to know about you and a little bit of your history.

William: Sure.

Jaime: What is your background, where were you born?

William: Sure, I was born in Washington Heights in Upper Manhattan in Jewish Memorial Hospital, it is gone now, June 30th, 1966. Washington Heights was a great

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neighborhood, we [00:02:00] lived in Inwood, Washington Heights most of my life until ... Not most of my life, I guess my childhood until 13, 14 years old. Then we moved just a little further away, upstate to us, but it was just six steps to the subway to the Bronx. I think that was a typical migration at that point, people got out of Washington Heights and they moved to Kingsbridge, Riverdale. Then I lived Riverdale, that is the still the same neighborhood that I live now. It is a fantastic neighborhood, I like it. It is pretty mellow, nice, kind of quiet. I like it up there, it is nice. [00:02:30] I like Washington Heights too though, I could be tempted to move right back there if I could find a parking spot.

Jaime: Where are your parents from?

William: My parents are both from ... My mom is from Washington Heights, I think she is still angry that she moved out of there 30 something, 40 years ago or whatever, but she grew up in Washington Heights, her family was from Washington Heights. Her mother was from Hell's Kitchen and ... I guess they were Irish roots, but they were ... We don't go much further back than Hell's Kitchen. Her father is ... It is [00:03:00] like a long sort of story. My mother has four other brothers and sisters. This is back in the old days, things weren't as freewheeling as they are now. My mom is the youngest out of the five, my grandmother was really a tough character, really hardcore.

Trust me, I was the favorite. Out of all the grandkids, it was always the sweet Willie, I could do no wrong, but she was hardcore, she was really serious and she was big in the Democratic Party [00:03:30] in Washington Heights. She had these [inaudible 00:03:32] every year, election day and stuff like that we always used to be at the polls. My mom is the youngest out of five, so I never met my grandfather, but there was this guy, Uncle Gene hanging around. My grandmother was always single, but Uncle Gene was around, great guy.

He used to smoke half a cigarette and then put it out and then wait a couple of minutes and then light up the other half of the cigarette. That was his way of quitting. At one point later in my life, [00:04:00] maybe when I was 18, 20 years old, I figured out, "Wait a minute, Uncle Gene was actually my grandfather and my mother had a different father than the four other kids, but nobody was saying this out loud." Once I did demand at some point, I was like, "Wait a minute Mom." She was shocked that I figured it out and everything. At least I had got to meet him, so that was my Uncle Gene.

He disappeared pretty early, he got sick and passed away when I was young, my grandmother too. At least I knew them well. On my father's side my father [00:04:30] was also from Manhattan, a lot of places, but mostly, I think, his childhood was around 101st Street and Manhattan Avenue on the west side of Manhattan there. His mother, though, was from [Tipperary 00:04:42], his father was a psycho. I don't know, I have very vague memories of my father's father but most of it was all him yelling in the kitchen, "Don't touch that, leave that alone"

My grandmother on my father's side was the sweetest woman in the world, she was lovely. She had the fantastic lyrical way [00:05:00] of talking with the Irish brogue. It was like ... I remember it was always like, "Oh, have a cup of tea, it will warm the cockles of

your heart." She had all of these cool little sayings in stuff like that. She was fantastic, I loved her, Grandma Ward, but she passed away when I was young too. She was always in the neighborhood, so I was close to both my grandmothers, they were always around a lot until maybe around teenager or whatever.

My father has a sister, like I said, my mother has four brothers. Pretty [00:05:30] smart guys and stuff, my Uncle John is a bit of nutcase, they are still working though. My mother retired at 62, 63, the youngest one. The other four are still working, two are working. One is on a Board of Ed and another one is a doorman, never missed a day of work and he is like 90, who knows? My aunt Mary is in California, she is kind of retired, but I bet she has resumes out looking to get a job too. She just can't get enough, they just can't get enough of work, my Aunt Joan works in Long Island. I have a little longevity on [00:06:00] that side.

My father passed away a few years ago, it was sad to see him go, I was very close with my father, he worked in [con ed 00:06:07], he was a worker too. He was a hard scrabble guy, grew up kind of tough. His parents maybe weren't the most present when he was younger, so he was a street guy who got a job in Con Ed though. At some point, when I was teenager, got himself sober and that was big changing part of his life because what he was drinking, up until I was about 12, 13 years old, those [00:06:30] were wild times. That is another interview altogether. It was wild, he was a hardcore drinker in neighborhood with a lot of hardcore drinkers and the things associated with that will stick with you.

There is a lot of stuff happening there but he was fantastic, he was a great athlete. My father was a fantastic athlete and a fantastic father. None of that stuff bothered me at all but unbelievable baseball player, football player. He was short, he was 5'2", but he [00:07:00] was fantastic at it. When of the parents played, he would play stickball in the street and he would be clocking home runs into Amsterdam Avenue in the Bronx and all of the softball games that we played in the parents' softball games, he was the best. He was the best all-timer in the game all the time. He was a fantastic golfer. Not fantastic, but just as good as me, we started at the same time, and he would drive the ball 204 yards, 250 yards. He was good at it, he was a natural.

He was fun to be around too, my father was a fantastic [00:07:30] listener. He was a great talker and BS'er and he had a way of talking, he would engage anybody in a conversation and he was a fantastic listener. If you spoke to my father, he listened. He just loved to have conversations. I remember being a kid in Manhattan, when I was 12, 13 years old, whatever it was, and we were in a pizza shop by Hunter College on Lexington Avenue, in that general area there. In walked Rocky Marciano. Now, I knew boxing was big when I was a kid, when I was young boxing [00:08:00] was big and I kind of knew who he was.

I didn't say anything to my father, he goes, "Hey champ, how are you doing?" Now he is shaking hands with my father and they are talking and my father introduced me to Rocky. "Billy say hello to Rocky, Rocky this is my father." My father used to always introduce me as, "This is my father." He always used to say, "I want you to meet my father." All the time up until the end. He always did. I left that pizza shop thinking my

father had known him his whole life and they grew up together, he would just say, "Hey, how are [00:08:30] you doing?" That is the way he was. That was his manner, just to talk to people, anybody on the street. He had the best time doing it. Strangers in restaurants, it used to drive my mother crazy. He would just walk up to people in restaurants and talk with them and my mother would be like, "Oh my god." Fun times.

Jaime: He was a sportsman, what about yourself? What are some of your hobbies?

William: I grew up typical, playing baseball. I played baseball for a long time, I loved playing [00:09:00] baseball. I love pitching and having control over the ball and throwing at people and having control of the game. I love that. Baseball, football, basketball, all of that stuff was important to me. I got into a two year stretch where I did all of that running and stuff like that. I kind of run just for cheeseburgers and pizza now it seems like, not really. You know what I like to do, I like to snowboard. Snowboarding is my favorite thing to do.

I do a little skateboarding but now, because of work right now, I [00:09:30] have work pants, so I don't ... It is hard to find time to just go out and do skateboarding, but when I had it as part of my commute, I lived on top of a big hill, so I would come out my house in the morning, and I would bomb this killer hill all the way down to Broadway. Every day for years on my big long board. It was wild because you are fresh out of the house and now you are cooking down a hill. I don't care what kind of coffee you get in the morning, it ain't never as good as that. That is top notch. You are [00:10:00] boogieing it and sometimes there is cars and sometimes there is not cars, sometimes you get a power slide out, sometimes it is an easy ride to the train, but you never know what you are going to get.

You get onto that train and you know you feel better than anybody in that care because you already had a day, you just already had a day. You are thinking about, when you get on that train, "I am going to walk back up the hill and take another one. I got 15 more minutes, I can make this happen." Then I would get off the train further way and run my skateboard to the job and back. I still see guys now, "Hey, you got a skateboard in that van? Usually I do.

You never know when you are going to get a flat [00:10:30] tire or something parked on a hill, maybe you want to ride down. Snowboarding, I like to take those big trips, I like to go snowboarding, I like to go as often as I can. It is incredibly fun, it is a bust. That is my favorite thing. I like to hang out in summertime and go to the beach all the time. Even though I can't get a suntan, I love to be in the ocean and swim around. I love it, I just can't wait. I was on-call this weekend, I couldn't go out but I would have been right there, probably Orchard Beach, Puerto Rican day, it would have been great.

Jaime: [00:11:00] Very good.

William: Yeah, my wife had a good time.

Jaime: Speak about work, can you tell me how you became an electrician?

William: Sure, absolutely. My mom used to bowl. Both my parents were bowlers, great bowlers, my father is a great bowler, my mother bowled a lot. My father had kind of quit it early. When I was young, there was bowling alleys everywhere. In Washington Heights, in the Bronx, [00:11:30] everywhere, everybody bowled. My mother was on a mixed league right down the block from our new neighborhood and one of the guys on the team was an electrician. They talked and I was in St. John's University, but I was clueless at 18, 19. I had no focus, I didn't know what to do. It wasn't a problem passing the classes, it was just like, "I want to make some money, I don't want to be a busboy forever. I want to go make some money and get a job."

[00:12:00] I probably would have enrolled again ... I don't know, I don't know, I was a little clueless. Like I said, I lacked direction, I lacked focus when I was young. I just wanted to hang out and party most of the time. College with as great for that, hanging out and partying. You could almost major in that it seemed like. I put in application for Local 3, the guy was like, "It might be a good thing." The first time I didn't get in and then I [00:12:30] took it personally. "What do you mean they didn't let me in? What are they talking about? I deserve to be in there, how could they turn me down?"

I went to school a little longer, I am at college, I took another semester there and I was doing work. I was doing a lot of odd jobs, I was a private investigator at one point, which is nonsense. I had a great job at ... Shares in Lehman Brothers for about a year before I became an electrician where I was doing I/O control and scheduling these [00:13:00] jobs and it was a computer job and very technical. It was great, I enjoyed it, was fantastic. It was challenging, a lot of problem solving, a lot of making sure things happened. People counted on you, it wasn't delivering pizzas, it wasn't just driving a cab or being a waiter.

Jaime: [crosstalk 00:13:18] that?

William: It was about 20, 20, and everybody around me was a little older and there were a lot of college graduates and stuff like that, but my father was Con Ed, he knew [00:13:30] the chief of operations for company there, we were like a VP in chief for Lehman Brothers. I went for the interview and they were like, "Well, we don't really need to have this interview do we, you know so and so." I was like, "Yeah, I do." I didn't know what the guy's name was or anything, but I got the job automatically just because my father was a great communicator.

It was a great job but when Local 3 came around, I was like, "I want to go to Local 3." Wearing a suit every day and being trapped in that office in a little cubicle. Even though it was great when you solved the problems, [00:14:00] it still, "I am wearing a suit, I am in this nice office, there is politics and people whining. You can never really say what you really feel." You know what I mean? It is all a lot of posturing and stuff. I said, "I am going to go and give Local 3 a chance."

I wasn't the most mechanical guy and stuff like that and maybe I wanted something more than that and I wanted to work outside more and try something different, 20, 21 years old, keep trying [00:14:30] stuff. When I told my boss, they said, "Look, we would like you to stay, we will give you a promotion, we will give you some money." I was

making good money, I was about 20 years old and making 27 grand a year, which was a lot of money back then, I took about a \$12,000, \$13,000 pay cut I think to come into local 3. It was a ... I told my boss and she was like, "We would love to have you."

At some point she told me, "Billy kid," Kathy [Sowaro 00:14:55] is her name. Kathy and Rich Ferrard, great people. She told me "Billy." [00:15:00] In private, afterwards when it is like, "No, I am leaving, two weeks I am gone." She said, "Billy, you know what, you are fantastic at your job, we love what you do, we value you here, you know we do. My boyfriend is a local 3 electrician and you are much more like him than you are like any of us. I wish you luck." I never looked back, I was wearing a suit on a Friday and by Wednesday I was ... I think I started on a Thursday, right? Thursday I was working construction [inaudible 00:15:27] and electric in [Alamack 00:15:27] doing up the outside of the building.

Jaime: That [00:15:30] was the first day on the job?

William: First day on the job, 40 floors up.

Jaime: Do you remember that day?

William: I remember that day vividly.

Jaime: What was special about it?

William: Steve [Corwin 00:15:39] was my first year, he was great, I met him in the morning. "Keep your hands out of your pockets, keep your hands out of your pocket." I was walking around with my hands in ... Mike would be like "Get your hands out of your pocket, Red." Everybody called me red. We got a hickey, I couldn't believe something on the job was called a hickey. You really? You are calling it a hickey? You get the hickey to bend nipples. I couldn't believe what they were saying. "We are going to make nipples[inaudible 00:15:59] we are going to bend these [00:16:00] ups, and then we are going to get nipples."

The pipe is coming out and we had to straighten them out and then make nipples to go into the bottom of the panel. It would be short piece of pipe and then I got the hickey, which we used to bend the galvanized pipe, me and Steve [Corwin 00:16:13] and that is what we did. We did a few other things. On the first day, we had removed the ... A photo cell or something from the wall and, at some point, I am standing there by myself. I don't even know what I am doing, of course, I am just trying not to get hurt. A laborer says, "You got that photo cell?" I said, "Yeah, sure. It is here." We came [00:16:30] back and Steve asked me, "Where is the photo cell?" I said, "The laborer came by, I gave it to him. That guy over there." He was like, "What the? What are you doing? You can't do that."

I was like, "I don't know who he is, that is why I gave it to him." He was like, "You are out of your mind you knucklehead." Then later that day there was overtime and overtime we went up to the top of the of the [Alamack 00:16:52] and we were bending 90s and

they made me and this other first day apprentice sing 'Look For The Union Label' standing on Top of there. [00:17:00] It was dark out, it was eight o'clock at night in March. "Come on, Red, get up there. Look for the union label." It was hilarious.

Jaime: That was your first day?

William: My first day, that afternoon we were up on the deck and I was only on the first or second floor the whole day. Now it is like, "Red, do you want to work overtime?" I was like, "I will work, sure." It was a Wednesday, so it was a Wednesday and I was a Tuesday, Thursday guy. It was a school. Work [00:17:30] and (noises). I was hanging on me outside of that gate looking out like I can't believe I am finally in one of these things and it was my first day. It was fantastic, it was fantastic. That job, Simpson Electric 1988, March 24th. It was a fantastic job

That weekend, that weekend we would all go out to eat to some Bobby Robino's, some rib joint that was on the corner there. We are all going out to eat and the foreman says, "Red, you are coming with me." The foreman, Jimmy Tuccio, he was the number two, but he was in charge [00:18:00] of the job while the foreman was away. He makes me sit down next to him and he starts talking to me. He is talking, "Billy Ward, Billy Ward. Let me ask you something Billy Ward, you are from Washington Heights?"

I am like, "Yeah." He is like, "187th Street?" "Yeah." "Your mom Dulcie, your father Bill? Same name?" I was like, "Yeah." He was like, "I grew up with your parents, I knew them 30 years. My name is Jimmy Tuccio, I am good friends with your [00:18:30] Uncle Bobby. I know Joey Zanger, I know Jimmy [Prestopino 00:18:34]" He starts naming all of these names that I heard my whole life. I got a job. He says, "We got a job, it is right up there, where are you living? Riverdale?" I am like, "Yeah, yeah." This all on lunch, he knows me 15 minutes.

"We got a job, we will send you up there to Johnny [Arista 00:18:48] It is right in your neighborhood. Johnny is a sweetheart blah, blah, blah." I went to that job and I worked for that guy, it was walking distance. I used to walk to the job every day. My friends from the neighborhood would come on the job and look for me it was so close. It was [00:19:00] so friendly, it was so cool. Johnny [Arista 00:19:03] was a fantastic foreman. One of the journeymen on the job was a guy that I was scared of when I was little younger in my neighborhood. He was a biker looking dude with a braided beard and long hair and now he was all cleaned up.

I was like, "You are an electrician?" He was like, "Yeah, I know you from the neighborhood." One of my best buddies, Mike [Hovsiad 00:19:20]. From that day now, he is like one of my best friends. Fantastic job. I was with Simpson Electric for two years and I did residential shield [inaudible 00:19:28] and stuff like that. It was great, it [00:19:30] was the best. That job there, Simpson Electric, I was with Steve [Corwin 00:19:33] for a couple of days, but then I was with this guy Greg [Madison 00:19:35] for a year. Greg passed away a couple years ago, but he was a fantastic journeyman and taught me so much about pulling wire and circuitry and craftsmanship and conducting yourself and being involved.

Greg was a big proponent of being part of your union, don't listen to these guys who are always telling you, "No, no, no. Red." He called me Red too, everybody called me Red. I don't think any of these guys knew [00:20:00] my real name once, they just always called me Red. It was amazing because no matter where I went, they wouldn't even call me by my name. If I went to new jobs on the week, everybody would say, "All right, Red. You and Keith go over here." They wouldn't even acknowledge that you had a name. Good times.

Jaime: You did all of this stuff early in your apprenticeship, what is it that you remember about your apprenticeship? Your transition into MIJ [inaudible 00:20:29]

William: The apprenticeship was great, [00:20:30] I worked for Simpson for a couple of years and then I remember getting rotated the first time. Rotated, you move to a different chap that does a different kind of work and I remember being on the phone with a woman from the employment office and she says, "Where do you live?" I said, "I live in Riverdale, in the Bronx." She said, "Okay, hold on." Then she gets back and she says, "Okay, I have a job and it is Coney Island." I was like, "Why did you ask me where I lived? Why didn't you just tell me I was going to Coney Island? Why would you ask me where I lived if you were going to send me as far away from my house as you could go [00:21:00] and stay in the five boroughs?"

That was great, that was [CEEKIS 00:21:03] that as a small jobbing shop, it was totally opposite of what I had done, totally different work. You would be on three different jobs a day with one guy. I remember that guy was a fantastic guy, long hair, he sung in a rock band, Don [Depersio 00:21:15], he was still an electrician. He was unbelievable and he taught me a lot too about job and going to different jobs and talking to the customer and organizing this stuff and being self-organized and self-sufficient. You can't trust everybody out there on [00:21:30] the road with a van to do the right thing, you got to have a certain amount of honor out there that you are not taking advantage of it. You have to be ready to go to the next job and take the next job.

You can't be like, "I am going to stretch this out for another two hours." You can't do that, that is when you lose customers, you lose ... You have to be able to hustle, and then you can enjoy that freedom you have there by being out and not having to answer to an immediate supervisor and stuff like that. He taught me a lot about that, that applies right now. He was great. Then a couple of other shops. MIJ [00:22:00] was a little wild because there was a lot of unemployment, but I wasn't actual MIJ so, at some point, to compensate for the unemployment, they changed things to stretching out the apprenticeship for another year and credited you for the time.

I was actually MIJ, I did some other stuff called MJX, which was a program back in the day and it was almost like a ... You got credited for your time as an MIJ, but you weren't really an MIJ. You got a dollar off a fourth of your pay and you were like an apprentice they could leave on a job [00:22:30] by yourself. That was great, that was ... For a crazy Irish guy. An Irish guy ran the shop, he was out of his mind. No, I was a ... Yeah, that was one of them. I was an MIJ in that shop. The MJX was for the Irish guy. Then I was an MIJ the first day I was MIJ, so I got laid off from the Irish guy, he let me write my own lay-off.

He could barely run a business, he was failing at business. Nice guy, [00:23:00] forgot his name though. He has a super mullet, all short in the front and long in the back. Great mullet, man, he was silver. I will think of his name. An hour from now it will come to me and I will tell you. My first day MIJ, I was working for Highly Electric, a Payless Shoe Store on 34th Street. The shop foreman shows up in the morning, he meets me and he gives me two phone numbers, one for the shop and one for the supply house, and a set of prints. The store was halfway done. [00:23:30] He said to me, "I hope you are better than the guy we had yesterday because we laid him off yesterday too. He came in yesterday and we laid him off yesterday. He didn't know what he was doing"

He said, "I will be back in the afternoon." I am there, I am an apprentice, I have no idea what is going on. The carpenters are burying us in. The stupid carpenter sat around the side there and I was like, "Dude, you are burying me." He was like, "That is too bad." I was like ... I think I told him ... What did I tell him? I think I made a deal [00:24:00] with him, I said, "I will get you guys a 12 pack at lunch if you just hold off." "Right on, no worries." That is it, so I got these guys a 12 pack of beer on ice and now the walls are open, I get all my outlets in and stuff like that.

Meaning the apprentice would pull all the wire and stuff like that. They sheet rocked it in the afternoon and the foreman comes back and he is like ... He knew what the problem was, he knew I was going to get buried and he was like "Did you get those outlets in?" This guy had no style, no friendliness [00:24:30] to him whatsoever. I said, "Yeah, they are all there. What is the big deal? What are you crying about man?" He was angry. Now we go outside to do this rolling gate, he came back to do this rolling gate. It was the rolling gate, it goes up and down.

He is up there doing his thing, "Turn the key." I turn the key, I am on the dumb end because I am an idiot. I turn the key and said, "It is going backwards." "No, it is not." I said, "Well, if I turn it going up, it is going to go down." "Ah, okay. I fixed it." We locked the gate right there. "You come [00:25:00] in in the morning, you raise the gate." I said, "It is backwards." Okay, I come in in the morning, I got the key, it is the second day of MIJ, the whole rolling gate goes down, just like I told him it was going to do. Crunch, now he had 25, 30 guys looking to get onto this job and we can't get in.

We got to get in through the chain in a little side window, everybody is climbing through this little two foot window to get into this thing. He comes later and I said, "Bro, I told you it was backwards." "You did not [inaudible 00:25:29]" All right, whatever. [00:25:30] I let him rage, I didn't fight back, I didn't argue with him at all. I had just waited six months for a job, what is the point of arguing with this guy? He has got a head like a rock anyway, he is not going to listen. You can already size him up as the guy who would point the finger at everybody else in the world except accept responsibility. That was no problem. We did that job and we did a bunch of other jobs. I got laid off in a church, that was fun. I got laid off in a church, which is nice to say. I don't know way, but it just sounds like fun. [00:26:00] It was fun, I made it through my MIJ, I did some pole painting with Wells Mack.

Jaime: What do you mean? Pole painting?

William: Pole painting? Poles, aligning installation, I guess Wells Mack had contract to do pole painting, you drive around in a truck, you paint a bunch of poles in a day and you get paid. It was fantastic. There was no thinking or anything like that, we would change the door, paint the pole, move on. That was a great job. At some point, though, it was terrible because you get paint all over you, this hard, toxic silver paint. At some point in the middle there, I talked to the guy, Joe [Spadudo 00:26:30] [00:26:30] , who is the foreman and he said he needed somebody who had computer skills.

Immediately I leaned on my shares in Lehman thing and I was like, "Absolutely." I spent the tail end of my MIJ, probably the last nine months in my J time, in a building in Queens in the Department of Traffic with the project manager from Wells Mack. He asked for a raise, they said, "No, but we will give you an MIJ." They gave him me. They were computerizing the intersections and Manhattan so they were putting computerized controllers in the sections of Manhattan [00:27:00] and me and him would time them. He would do the weekly data and I would compile the daily reports.

I would start at four hours, these guys were out there trying to knock out six to eight intersections a day, whatever it was that justified their day, and I would just sit there and hit a couple of buttons to run a program and then we would remotely time these intersections and I would generate a report. Then Pat would compile the report and put the data in a ... So that it could be digested by whoever or whatever traffic [00:27:30] engineer was looking at it. These guys would stand there and they would time these intersections.

It was great because it was casual clothes, I could ride a bike across the Queensboro Bridge, I was taking my skateboard. It was just unbelievable, sneakers. I remember going to Wells Mack on Friday afternoons and pick up my check and guys would be like, "I hate you Billy Ward." Shorts and a shirt. You would have to wear a sweater in the computer room in the department of traffic because it was so cold, it would be 90 degrees out and you would have a knapsack [00:28:00] in it and it would just have a sweater in it so you could hang out in a room because it was so cold.

It was a fantastic job and it was a computer oriented job. It was great and those guys were great in the field. It was funny, I worked with them for nine months, I didn't even meet them until the end, like when we were all at the shop together. I was like, "You are Barry? I can't believe you are Barry man. I have been talking to you for nine months." Great guys, the project manager was a great guy too, Pat Bert, man fantastic guy. Really, really a good gentleman. Very nice guy.

Then I became a journeyman and I stayed [00:28:30] with Wells Mack for a little while, worked at the airports for a year or two with them. That was fun. It was fun working at the airport on the ass side of the airport. It is hard work, you really, really work and you are chopping in to manholes, you are running a conduit on the runway. You are on a runway, planes are landing, things are happening at the airport. People are going places, they are coming home, there are reunions, there are depart ... Well, there is an energy to that and it is fun to be around that. I just loved looking at those planes taking off and landing. My wife and I, we were just boyfriend and girlfriend, we [00:29:00] used to go sit there in watch in the South Bronx and they would fly over and land at La Guardia.

There were nights where it was so cloudy and that plane would come out of nowhere and it would be right over your head. I remember me and Mark [Stentmen 00:29:11] were working one night, we were doing a job and we were putting the wire together, or whatever it was, in a hole. It has to be done, you have to get this runway up, it is around noon. All of a sudden, they start wheeling this plane over to us, real close, and it is some little back corner of JFK there. This is [00:29:30] 20 something years ago, it is a long time ago, '94, '95. It is not the same kind of environment that we are in today. We don't take time to [inaudible 00:29:39]

Then we see all of the other Wells Mack truck disappear and the [Helman 00:29:43] trucks and everybody is leaving. Now it is only me and Mark. I was like, "What is going on man? Are we breaking, is this the end of the day for us?" We are not even association this plane over here with the departure of our boys. We are thinking ... I don't know what we are thinking because that boss would never let us leave early. We worked like psychos on that job. It was a great job, [00:30:00] we loved it and it was almost competitive how hard you could work. Me and Mark were like, "I don't know, I don't know." Then finally he comes over and he is like "Guys, guys."

Then, as he is talking to us, you can see the sirens coming our way to. He is like, "That plane has a bomb threat." They got a threat of a bomb on that plane and we were like, "Okay, we are out of here." He was like, "No, we got to finish this hole. We can't leave until this hole is done, we got to get this runway on. There is a bomb threat." I am looking at Mark and we are both saying, "I will go in a hole, I will go in a hole. [00:30:30] I will jump in the hole." Neither one of us wanted to go in the hole and now we are both fighting to go in that hole because 100 yards away there is a plane that could have a bomb on it.

We got the hole and we drove away, it was no big deal. There was no bomb on the plane or anything like that, but it was so funny because it was like everybody is gone. The foreman though, to his credit, he didn't disappear, he stayed right there with us. He was so angry he would have stared down the bomb, he was a serious dude. He was a serious guy, but it was fun [00:31:00] man.

Jaime: You said you are a level 4 tester?

William: Yes.

Jaime: NETA certified?

William: That is right.

Jaime: You spoke a little bit about not knowing what you wanted to do in your younger years and college not being something that you were interested in. What changed Billy?

William: I loved being an electrician it was fantastic and I had no problem with the college classes and getting the associated [inaudible 00:31:27] that is fine. I am always good in a classroom, I take notes even [00:31:30] if I am at some place, I always took notes, I am

always digesting stuff, I have good reading comprehension, I do a lot of reading, I do all that stuff. At some point in my career, about 20, 15 years ago, about 15 years ago, I felt like I wasn't involved enough.

[inaudible 00:31:45] leaflet and I did the bare minimum. I wasn't really associated with a club, I was just like [inaudible 00:31:50] or anything like that. Then I was talking to my wife and I felt vulnerable. I felt vulnerable that you could be just another number on [00:32:00] a job. You could just be a great journeyman but get caught in the shuffle and go. I didn't feel like there was enough security in that and I felt a vulnerability in the industry as a whole that people don't appreciate the collective bargain agreement that there are always enemies on the outside looking to take what we got that would consider [inaudible 00:32:17] or anything like that.

Which is nonsense because ... I don't want to get too crazy, but just look at the fatalities on the job. How, out of, what is it, 31, 33 fatalities last year [00:32:30] in the construction industry, something like 30 of were non-union jobs? It is important to have ... Not even to mention the education, the camaraderie, all of the stuff, the positive things, the wages, the benefits, all that stuff. It is fantastic, but I digress. I felt like I wasn't involved enough and I wanted to get more involved in my union and I wanted to find something that was a little more technical and I didn't know what that was at [00:33:00] the time.

I didn't even know anything about testing so I found my way to the sportsman's club, which is a great club. I enjoy that club, they are very active and stuff. Very welcoming, very active. There is always a little mission to do, and it is a lot of community stuff. Street fair, night out against crime, autism walk. All these things they do, they got a Labor Day parade, so you are out there. I like talking to people, I am kind of like my father like that. I don't mind engaging with people, I don't mind that they have a different view than me.

I am happy [00:33:30] to indulge that for a little while. You can have a different view than me, it is not going to change my opinion. I am not going to have a hard time with that. I enjoy that stuff, so we are always out and about. I took care of that with my involvement, and taking a part in my union a little bit, and I wanted something a little more technical, and I happened to be on a job ... First time in the trade center, but really at the Astoria Powerhouse and I saw what these testers were doing and I saw that it was out-of-towners doing it and I was not real too crazy about [00:34:00] that.

Now they have to got the computers out and they are doing stuff and they are troubleshooting. I remember asking ... Dick Coleman I had seen on the job, asked him a bunch of questions about it, he was a tester, he was a local guy. I said, "Man, I would like to do that." I was working for John [Papandrea 00:34:15], who was one of the best ever, absolutely legendary John [Papandrea 00:34:19] for EJ Electric at the Astoria Powerhouse. I talked to John about it, how I wanted some more.

John would give me more technical jobs, we were working at 1380 switch house, he let me do wiring, [00:34:30] he let me do ... Not the easy jobs, but technical jobs. Big jobs, important jobs. "I want Billy to be involved with this 138,000 volts oil circuit breaker. I

want Billy to be involved with this." A guy named Doug Phillips, who was an IBEW guy from upstate, but he was working for the switch gear company interim. When he was unemployed up there, he would work for this switchgear company called MSC.

He was doing function testing and commissioning of the switch gear in that 138,000 volt switch yard. We tested batteries together, [00:35:00] we yellow lined prints, one line diagrams, we went through the whole switching out proving how every relay worked, proving out the circuits, proving out the 86 relays, proving out the function testing and everything. Stuff that I am now am aware of, and I do, but I was amazed at it and he would have the prints out, and he would be like, "Okay Billy, we are trying to turn while this 86 was rolled and we can't turn it on."

He proved this part, "Now, let's reset that 86 and try it again." Bang, up the breaker goes. Now we can [00:35:30] yellow line this and we would go on and on and on and I was like, "This is what I got to do man, I got to do this stuff. I want to be this guy." I wrote a letter, I didn't know, I just talked to the guys from ... " I guess it was American Electric and they said, "Write a letter." I wrote a letter to educational cultural and it was ... No, it wasn't written in crayon on construction paper, it was a full form letter addressed to the educational cultural committee and multiple [00:36:00] paragraphs about why I thought I was good for the job, I have a natural curiosity, I am a troubleshooter, I feel like I am calm in a crisis, I am this, I am that.

Really trying to express how much I want to get into this class. I want to ... A few years later, that class actually happened to come around, I was lucky enough to get into the class. Now that is only part of the battle, is getting into the class. We get into class, the two teachers were fantastic, Richard [Bert 00:36:26] and Dick Coleman had been teaching in the apprenticeship and [00:36:30] safety and he had been high voltage [inaudible 00:36:33] 30 years at that time and he had quite a reputation in the business. Handlebar mustache, the whole look he had going for him.

Ritchie Berger is one of the brightest Erie guys I know. He is an incredible tester, he is a smart guy, really, really, unbelievable. Can go through Kirchhoff's Law without even checking. It is like 'Good Will Hunting' with him. These guys taught the class, I was in a class, it was great, [00:37:00] I enjoyed the class. I took notes. Like I said, I take notes for everything. I had a full notebook on that class, I would go home, I would look stuff up at night, I would answer all the questions, blah, blah, blah.

You get to the end of the year, there is not even a written test, there ain't even like a normal test, maybe they give written test, I don't even know. You get out of that class and then I am a shop steward. They make me a shop steward right out of that class. I am like, "I will never test." Because I got active with the union, somebody thought I would make a good shop student also, so I am working these parallel pads hoping to make myself [00:37:30] more valuable somehow, and it turned out that I wanted one more path than the other. I wanted to be more of technician than a shop steward.

I took the shop steward job with no complaint, it is an honor that somebody would ask you to take that job, an honor. I worked for [Luchier 00:37:44] in Brooklyn and it was fantastic. It was a tough job, it was a very difficult job. It is hard to make guys

understand that there is another viewpoint besides their own. Often I think guys get a little myopic and only see things from their point of view. It was a very [00:38:00] difficult job. Luke called me up about five months into it, I was on my second job and he says, "Hey, three weeks ... [Olempko 00:38:09] wants you for three weeks to do high voltage testing." I was like, "Really?"

He goes, "Yeah." I say, "All right, is it all right with you?" He was like, "Yeah, it is fine, three weeks no problem." I went to the shop [Olempko 00:38:22] three weeks for testing. It turns out that the guy behind me in class had gotten hired first and when [00:38:30] the super of the shop, Dick Coleman, who had taught the class asked him who else should we hire, he said, "You should hire the guy with the red hair who sat in front of me. We all cheated off of him." He managed to find me on a fishing trip.

This guy flew out to Montauk and he asked his father, "Who is that guy over there with the red hair. He was in my testing class. I want to get him into [Olempko 00:38:53], do you know him?" His father said, "That guy over there? Billy Ward?" He goes, "Yeah, that is his name. Billy Ward, now I remember. [00:39:00] I heard he is a shop steward, who does he work for?" His father said, "He works for me. "What do you mean who does he work for?" He said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah." "Would you let him go?" He said, "Sure man." I went for three weeks and then three weeks turned into 10 years.

Jaime: Wow.

William: I guess I wasn't that good of a shop steward because Louie let me go right away. I thought I was doing a good job, but now I work for Mike [Sierra 00:39:23] and now he is my superintendent, the guy who came to the shop a couple of months ahead of me is now Dick Coleman, who was the super, he now retired and now Mike [Sierra 00:39:30] is [00:39:30] my boss and we came up together, studying and learning. He is a level three tester but that is because he went into the shop to do stuff. If he takes that test, he will pass it too. He is a smart guy.

Jaime: Explain to me a little bit about the test. What does it entail?

William: What do you mean test?

Jaime: The testing you test for the certification.

William: We belong to a testing shop. The testing shop, [Olempko 00:39:54] that I worked for, belongs to an organization International Electrical Testing Association and they are aligned [00:40:00] with IEEE and [Nancy 00:40:02] with the guidelines and the standards and they also have a protocol for test technicians. Just working for NETA accredited shops. You don't have to be NETA accredited, we have a shop in our industry, [NIABS 00:40:13] they are not NETA accredited, but some job require, like the Second Avenue subway, somebody would need a certification.

When I came to [Olempko 00:40:23], the level two test, just working there, you become a level one and then you have to take [00:40:30] a level two. The mindset of the guys

there were, now Local 25 guys before Dick Coleman was there. I mean the Long Island guys were coming into our jurisdiction and doing our work, just like I had seen with testing, it drove me crazy. How is it that we are the biggest and the best and we can man this job? We got 13,000 guys out there, what do we have, and these guys come over with their laptops and their megas and their high-pots and they are doing the best work on the job and seeing if our switchgear is good? I will have none of that.

We take care of our own, so I felt strongly about that. [00:41:00] Some things I get a little excited about. I felt like I was a little late to this testing game, so I get hired to the shop, 40 years old, 41 years old, a lot of guys have been doing this a long time. When I get to the shop and I get wind of these guys feel like level two test is impossible to pink. "They make it so you can fail, they make it [inaudible 00:41:19]" "They make a test so that when you pass the test, you prove that you are qualified." Not trying to make you fail. If you feel like they are trying to make you fail, then maybe you haven't studied enough [00:41:30] for that test. Maybe you are not prepared exactly.

These guys, maybe, I think were using a lot of their practical knowledge on a job, but that is not really what this test is about. They give you a curriculum, they give you certain elements to study for and then you take that test online or a computer. I made it my goal, I am going to make up for my lack of experience by passing these tests. These guys haven't passed the test in five, 10 years and they talk about it like it is impossible and I was like, "No way." They have a timeframe, you have two years to take the first test or whatever.

[00:42:00] I took it inside of my first year and I passed that level two test. I served a little notice there that, "No, I am here to stay. You guys got to pay attention." I am tell you I have notes, I have a huge notebook, I have index cards, I still got thousands of index cards and I would study constantly. I would go home for two hours, I would study. I was working with a local 25 guy named Brian O'Brien, who was brilliant. This guy was smart. I learned from him every day.

We worked on transformers, I went home, I looked up transformers, I came back with 20 questions on the transformer. We worked [00:42:30] on motor control center, I went home, I looked up motor control center, I came back with 20 questions. He would answer every question, he would answer, answer every freaking question. The biggest thing I learned from Brian O'Brien was when your phone rings, you answer it. You can't make no money if you ain't answering your phone and you can't be on that job that has that trouble call unless you answer that phone.

"My guys were lollygagging [inaudible 00:42:51] and my guys were looking and saying "I don't want to answer that." No, when the phone comes up, you answer it because that is the call and that is the problem and you have to solve the problem. He was [00:43:00] big on that and I love that. He was a great guy. I learned a lot of stuff so I took that level two test, served a little notice. Then right after me, Mike [Sierra 00:43:09] took the level two test, he passed it too. Now these guys, who have been a little set in their ways feel the heat a little bit because if you know how to do the job, it is really hard to lose a job because it is hard to replace you. No matter what, they can't replace you.

Even if you know how to do the job, even if you don't know the why's, even if you can work the mega, if you can work the BRL alone, the DPR, if you [00:43:30] can work all that equipment, there is a place for you. Maybe they got a little complacent so I served a little notice. After I took the test, then other guys started taking the test. All I did was follow the elements, studied what they told me to study and I am looking up OSHA things and looking up regs and looking up [Nancy 00:43:48] standards and going outside your normal wheelhouse to find certain publications and going to the shop and seeing if they have a library there and a lot of other stuff. Answering questions the way they want them answered.

They have their standards, [00:44:00] you can't answer a question by what you did on the job, they are looking for the textbook standard and you have got to apply that to the test. Like I said, I have no problem studying stuff like that. I took that test then I wanted to take that level three test and that is ... The level two test is the assistant, the level three is a certified testing technician, that is impossible, that is impossible. I took the level three test right around the time [00:44:30] ... I took ... The first time, I failed, I got a 68 out of 70, so I was really angry that I failed it, but I knew it was tight. I knew when I took the test that it was really close.

It was a difficult test and it is meant to be difficult. They don't want you standing pants in this test, you got to demonstrate. There is a whole wealth of information that you can study. So much stuff, it is so vast that if you had studied the 75 questions on that test, you could drive yourself crazy. I always thought of it like I want to catch a fish [00:45:00] and I want to catch a lot of fish I need to make the holes in my net small and I always felt like my studying make the holes in my net smaller. The smaller I can make the holes in my net, the more stuff I will catch, the more questions I will catch, the better I will be.

That is the way ... I failed it the first time. The second time was when I was running that race and I broke my foot and I broke my foot and I had to take the test the next day. My foot is killing me and I had broke my running in Van Cortland Park now I am hobbling back to my house, it is [00:45:30] dead in the middle of winter and I am wearing shorts and a t-shirt freezing. I got no money for a cab and I got a broken foot and I am trying to walk all the way up the hill. I go get my foot, or whatever, and I went to the emergency room and they were like, "Yeah, you got a broken foot thank you very much."

In between them telling me I got a broken foot, and me getting in going to see an orthopedist, I had that test in the middle. I was like, "I was going to go for a run, get my final study in. Now I am in pain, I can't take the painkillers because I don't want to be cloudy for the test." [00:46:00] I know it sounds like I am making excuses but, damn, I was so angry and I picked that Friday. If I had picked that Monday of that week, I would have passed. I failed that one two, another one by two questions, but I know I am taking the right test.

All right, so I failed it, but no one has passed this test in 15 years. You know why I am taking the right test, I know I am not discouraged, and I am not somebody who is easily discouraged. I know I am on the right path here. Then I take it six months later, you got to wait a cycle. Six months later and I passed that level three test, I blew through it

because I was prepared. It is a cumulative [00:46:30] thing, you study and study and study, you got more stuff in the bank already, now you can study the extra stuff.

Instead of worrying about the big stuff like gear transformers and circuit breakers. Now I am studying harmonics and the finer stuff, the really good ... Nobody in local three had taken a level four test, hadn't even taken the level four. Not the guys who taught the class, not the guys who were much brighter than me. "No way, it is impossible." I didn't think it was impossible, I applied the same thing. I am studying all my ... It is easy for me, I go home, [00:47:00] my wife has degrees flowing out of her pocket, she studied all through the early part of our relationship.

[inaudible 00:47:06] it is no problem for me to open up books and hang out, do my thing, drink a glass of wine, I can study for four hours, reading a textbook with my highlighter, making index cards, making index card, making index cards, making notes. Any time I am on the job, you study for 15 minutes, you flip out your index cards, you study a couple of things, device numbers and stuff like that, whatever it takes to get a feeling for what you are doing. I had failed that little four that one time. It was close though, a 62, [00:47:30] 63 so now I know I am taking the right test.

I know I am taking it, I am in the right room, this is a normal part of the process failing this thing. Last year, I was like, "I am taking this thing again." It was right after we went skiing, I think I took it in March, at the end of March. Right at the first ... They do it in three month segments, so I took it at the end of March. I studied a lot [00:48:00] and the test I took last year, I felt was harder than the one I took the previous year, much harder. I took it ... You took it on a computer and you have problem solving. It is all multiple choice, but a lot of those answers are so close together and they are meant to fool you. You have got to read the whole thing, you can't be in a rush.

If you are troubleshooting a problem on a job, you have to pay attention to the job. Reading a question is the same thing as me paying attention to the drawing, and looking through the circuit and paying attention to all aspects of this [00:48:30] so that I can find the root of the problem and solve this thing. You can't be rushing through the process there because you messed up and you have to go back to it and you find out that, "Oh, if I had only just followed all of the steps that I normally do to troubleshoot something, I would have caught this in 15 minutes. Now it is four hours later and I am tracing ..." No, reading the question, paying attention to it, comprehending what they are asking of you is important in those tests.

I took that test and I went all the way down. I am telling you I had three seconds left, I had three minutes left and I had 14 questions to review. It was like, "Oh my god, what am I going to do?" [00:49:00] I just went with it and I submitted that test. I was sure I failed it, but I got a 70, just skated by, and I was thrilled man. Jumping for joy. Now I am a senior certified test technician, NETA senior certified test technician, which is a big deal kind of. It is the only one in local three, there is not a lot of them in the country. In the right circles, it carries a bit of weight, people have a little appreciation for it.

I can't wave that card over a broken [00:49:30] circuit breaker and it is going to fix itself, it is not be all or end all, but it does signify, "Hey, this guy, he knows some stuff. He is no

clown here, he does know some stuff." It is nice to have and it is nice not to have to study. It is definitely nice and I do feel people think it is impossible until it is done. Now I tell everybody, "Take the test, study. Spend your time and study. You can pass it. It is not being smart, it is applying [00:50:00] yourself and studying." "Oh Billy, you are smart." I am not smart, I put a lot of time into it. It is not ... There is no rocket science into this, you just got to ... Well, there is electrical science, but you got to study.

Jaime: I want to ask you about job scenarios, new job dangers. What kind of tasks that you were involved in, especially throughout your career, but also now as a level four tester.

William: Now, with this testing stuff, it is [00:50:30] a lot of stuff, it is fantastic. You see a whole lot of stuff, it is not all high voltage, it is low voltage but it is a lot of troubleshooting, a lot of emergency calls like ... Well, I will work my way up. It is all different. Some jobs have normal maintenance contracts so you go there every year, like the New York Times plan or St. Johns University, I am at right now, and you go there every year and you test their medium voltage gear, maybe you test the low voltage gear. By testing it every [00:51:00] year, you can trend that data and you have some kind of ...

Jaime: Metrics or something?

William: Yes, you trend that data over time and it gives you some kind of predictability to what you want to look at in the future. This transformer is going bad, maybe we want to look at this. These cables are a little lower than the others, this circuit breaker has been showing signs of wear, maybe we want to take it out of service and do a full [roof 00:51:23]. The maintenance [00:51:24] testing is nice, but it is kind of ... You know what you are going to get. It is unusual for something to happen. Acceptance testing [00:51:30] is when we are having a new installation. The standards are a little different, but eventually it is the same kind of thing. You want to be a little more stringent in your testing because you want to make sure it is good to go in service.

It is the same kind of thing, you are on the job for six to eight weeks, two months, three months, whatever, and you are testing all the equipment. This works all the transformers and put them in place, then we evoke the circuit breakers and the big transformers, taking oil samples. Great stuff, it is still all great stuff because you are the one ... You are the arbiter of whether it is good or bad. People are all looking at you and asking you, "Is this good or bad, is this okay to turn on?" [00:52:00] Then you can take that decisions seriously because if somebody turns something on and they get hurt, ultimately it could be you.

We did a place and they had a fault and I had tested the whole plant the year before as part of our normal maintenance. They had a fault and something didn't operate a relay and part my exact scope, but I was in the switch gear and now my judgment is called into question. The insurance people ... I have been in meetings when it is ... My report is almost like evidence [00:52:30] and they are going over my previous years trying to poke holes in it, but my stuff is tight, I do a good job, I am a thorough guy. I wasn't ... I did my job, I tested something I was supposed to test. This was something out of my purview.

I had no ... "Maybe you should have expanded our part of the job and we would have caught this earlier," that was my [crosstalk 00:52:49] That was my issue, "You should have had us doing the relays, you should have had us doing point to points every five years." The insurance guys were all in the room there and they asked me a lot of questions [00:53:00] and my super, Dick Coleman, was right next to me and we talked before the meeting. I said, "Dick, if I look like I am in trouble, I need you to jump in and bail me out here. I am a little nervous." Dick had seen everything, he was like, "Billy, you will be fine. Don't worry about it."

Man they asked me a lot of questions, I answered all of them. It was right after that meeting I was like, "Man, I am probably pretty good at this." I started feeling a little more confident. You get that ... They say 10,000 hours in, I probably had about the 8,000 hours in at that point, so I was [00:53:30] well on my way, but after that meeting, I got asked by a lot of electrical engineers that I didn't know a whole lot of questions and I was able to answer them, not even looking at my report. I was familiar with the job. That was a tough situation, you don't want to see a customer end up on the floor. [crosstalk 00:53:51] but what I really like is the troubleshooting.

What I really like is when you go to a place and there is a problem and you don't know what that problem is and you got the figure it out and you are asking the people there and they give you three different [00:54:00] stories. One guy is telling you left, the other guys is telling you right, the other one telling you in the middle. You got to discern what is going on and, slowly but surely, one by one, these things show themselves to you. It is like they expose themselves. You start looking, you start taking measurements, you start chasing stuff down and it is there and you can see it over the horizon and you work towards it and, bang, now you have the whole thing.

Yesterday, I went to the VA hospital on 23rd Street and they did a generator run and they opened up all of their stuff. Now, [00:54:30] they have a bit of an antiquated system and they haven't done the right thing in maintaining it or setting it or anything. I have been to emergency calls there, not for a few years, but I have been to one or two. This was ... They have five 27 kV services going, they can't get anything going, anything on, so the whole building is running in generators in little certain spots there, that is for ATS switches, and we are now ... They can't get their medium voltage gear up, so they have 27,000 volts going into [Con Eds 00:54:58], it is going transformers and then [00:55:00] it is going to a five kV secondary breakers with a distribution going out to different parts of the campus there.

They lowered down it to utilization voltage. You get there and now they have nothing in and this guys is telling me, Sam is telling me, "We can't close down anything, we are tripping on under voltage." Meaning that the breaker, the relay, isn't seeing enough voltage for that breaker to close in. Instead of seeing 41, 60 volts, it is seeing something lower. Not lower than 41, 60, but lower than outside of the tolerance of that relay. [00:55:30] Now I am going around, checking everything, I could go step by step checking the 27, checking the voltage, I am checking PTs, I am checking the PT fuses, I am [racking 00:55:41] to break ground, I am checking for interlocks.

All the standard stuff, my partner shows up. "Billy, did you do this?" "I did that already." "Did you do this?" "I did that already." He is following the same path as I am. We try some little, sneaky sand thing I got going on because you can't see if this voltage is high enough unless the breaker is closed. The [00:56:00] way it is set up is that you close the main breaker, the little transformers get energized, send voltage to the relay, the relay has a two second time delay so once it sees the voltage, it doesn't activate.

I have the relay connected and I think I am good, trip circuit, so the relay sees this little voltage and then it sends a signal out to say, "Open the breaker. I don't like that is happening here, open the breaker." I do a little secret square removal of that, I have the trip circuit out, so I close in on this, the voltage, and the voltage isn't going [00:56:30] to hurt anything. I am not going to burn out a motor, nothing is connected to a load, it is not over current, it is not indicative of a fault, it is not indicative of a problem in that line, it is just that your voltage is a little low.

I close in, I get closed and now I can measure voltage. This guy is tripping out and they can see what they had. I can see that it was the first 90 degree day of the year, [Con Ed 00:56:48] probably a little low, his readings weren't perfect. He had no real reliable panel meters on. Like I said, it is an antiquated setup there and they don't do any [00:57:00] maintenance. Now I got some stuff, now I got some stuff to taste now. Let's go to another service. They are now only following one thing where they close one service, sink it, one service, they had their own [protocol 00:57:13] and that is all they do there.

They are house guys, they are not looking to solve a problem. I am like, "Okay, let's go to the other end." Now I am checking the other services, and now I got the voltage. "Okay, let's do this, I get the breaker in, I get the breaker closed, no load yet. Okay, I close in and now I can measure my voltage and I know I am not going to get a problem if I close in and I can see I have [00:57:30] adequate voltage going to this relay. Now we are going around, bang, bang, bang, and now I got the mains in. Let's get a little load over here, a little load over here. Oh man, it was awesome. Now the hospital is up and now I am telling the guy we got the one problem job, but everything is covered now.

I have three services out of five, one is locked out by [Con Ed 00:57:47] the fifth one is my problem. Now I can see that the fifth one is taking down other stuff. You are closing in, the fifth one is tripping out, so now I am like, "All right, I want to do this, I want to take out your PTs, I want to get my machine, I want to test for ratio. [00:58:00] I chase the circuit down and any drawings you have." These little drawings are eight by eleven, you can't read it. It is 45 years old, it is so washed out, I was like, "These are inadequate drawings. I need to chase down a circuit on your switchboard with a thousand wires and this isn't going to do it guys. You need to go to the office and get the real prints. Not this little book that you keep in the bottom of your desk that you haven't looked at in 10 years. You need to actually ..."

Sometimes they get a little lazy and you got to push these guys. I told them [00:58:30] ... They are going to have it for me Thursday when I go back. We went through the whole thing, we got the whole hospital up, I told them, "Okay, Sam, this is what I got. This is yesterday, Sunday." This guys is, "You ain't going to do nothing, We are getting out of

here, hospital is on, I am going home, man." He said, "You come back next week." I said, "Just give me a couple more hours. Maybe I can solve this [inaudible 00:58:50]" He said, "I am going home, man."

Jaime: There are quite a bit of hours.

William: Just six or seven hours, we were on a job. For me, it was like I was on [00:59:00] call over the weekend, which is kind of fun and terrible at the same time. You are sitting there on pins and needles the whole time checking your phone. The whole time I am on the phone. My wife would just make fun of me because I am like, "Is my ringer on? Is my ringer on?" I put the phone down. "Do I have enough batter, did I get a call? Oh my god, I left my phone." I am constantly checking it. I am sleeping with it, like on my pillow. I don't want to be the guy who misses a call.

I had gotten a call Friday night, I was at a function, I got home, I was home five minutes, [00:59:30] I got a call, an emergency, so I ran out to take out a 27 kV breaker. A lot of times, [Con Ed 00:59:36] will take out breakers, a main breaker that goes to feed a facility and sometimes the customer would rather have their own people taking it out. Resorts World Casino out there in Queens is us so we do their switching. We are the operators for their substation. We get a call for that, so I had to go out there at night. They had a ... [Con Ed 00:59:58] manhole fire so you got to isolate them [01:00:00] from the feeder so [Con Ed 01:00:01] could do the work on the feeder.

I get out there, I get out there and I get a partner. The hardest part about being on call is getting a partner on Friday night. They said, "What you got to do is you got always tell them it is switching and I sent out a group text." You tell them it is a switching job because switching is easy. They know they show up, I am going to do all the work. I am going to call [Con Ed 01:00:18], I am going to rack out the breaker and switch it, but if you tell them I got to troubleshoot, I got five services out in a VA hospital, nobody, you got crickets. Nobody will come.

Jaime: Bill, you do know that some of them may hear this. You are never going to get a partner [01:00:30] again.

William: Yes, I will. I will. Absolutely, I know who I can call. These guys can't turn it down. There is guys like me who can't turn it down, I want to be there. Even the three other guys who couldn't make it are calling me saying, "Did you try this, did you try that?" My buddy, Harry Johnson, "Did you try that?" He was already too late in the game. I had worked that job at Resorts World, I did that switching at the Resorts World and we get them all, everything is good.

Customer is all happy [01:01:00] and then I go home, I get home at four o'clock in the morning from that one and then I had to go to another job, so we worked all day at the hospital on a generator run and testing old breakers from 1959. These breakers are medium voltage, five kV breakers from 1959. Instead of using a vacuum model or something that is conventional technology now, they shoot a puff of air that shoots the

arc to an arc shoot and they have a blowout coil that aids in that whole suppressing [01:01:30] the arc.

It forces the electromagnetic force up, so it is like ... These are wild things, I am downloading a book from ... You don't see them too often anymore, so we were cleaning up. It was fun man, you don't see ... How often do you see something from 1959 that you get to service and it works fine? Tested good, lubrication in the proper points, all that stuff and it will last another 50, 60 years. Who knows? We did that ... That was up at [inaudible 01:01:54] and Jewish, we worked all day and we got that and we got them back up like 20 hours earlier than they [01:02:00] thought. That was a home run, but I was so worried. Coming home Saturday night after being up for 24, 30 hours, whatever I was up for, that I was going to get another call, but I didn't until the morning.

I woke up all fresh, I was starving, I had to run to the deli and get an egg sandwich while my wife was still sleeping. Usually we have breakfast together on the weekends, but I couldn't wait, it was like six thirty in the morning. Then by nine o'clock, I was on another emergency call. It was fun. You get on call a couple of times a year, is fun. It is fun to get calls that are worse off.

Jaime: [01:02:30] We are a little over an hour, I wanted to keep it within the [crosstalk 01:02:33] more things that are [crosstalk 01:02:34] In the future, do you think members of the community are going to be doing that same type of work that you are doing?

William: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, it is a tough job to export and it is important. Whenever I see a smart person on the job, I try to get them, I try to see if ... If I see somebody who I think has the skills, not anybody, but if I see somebody who has the skills and the kind [01:03:00] of self-determination. Like I said, you got to be motivated to be better, you got to have a natural curiosity to solve a problem. I always try to recommend those people to have this job. It is a great job and it is fantastic. The skills transfer all over. I haven't been to one of these NETA conferences yet, I expect to be going next year or something like that.

I want to talk to the like-minded guys to test us from out of state. Any time I talk to like minded guys, you see guys who are just in it because they know they got a good job and they can work a megger [01:03:30] and a high-pot, and they can work their test equipment, but they don't know why and when something goes awry, they can't think their way out of a problem. Those guys are fun and it is nice to have them around, but the guys I really like are the guys who have a curiosity, the guys who want to solve the problem, the guys who, when something happens, want to be there.

I heard something went down in the trade center last night, my super called me and said, "Billy, they got a cable that blew up in the trade center." We heard this from a port authority cop who told us, who happened to be a friend. I was like, "I am ready, bro. I am ready, I will go down there right now. I think my ID is still good." [01:04:00] You want to be the guy in the middle of it, you just have ... I don't know what that is, but I found out that I am that guy. I want to be that guy.

Jaime: What advice would you give to somebody starting out in your field? In your specialty?

William: Pay attention. Pay attention to the guys who came ahead of you, pay attention to safety. It is a dangerous thing that we do. It is not ... Electricity isn't dangerous, electricity is perfect, [01:04:30] electricity follows rules. There is not a lot of unpredictability there. Volts, amps, ohms, these things are governed by laws. Laws, they were figured out years ago. If the thing that makes it dangerous is that people aren't consistent. People make mistakes, people get tired and they slip up and they overlook something and they miscount or they misapply something and you put yourself in a vulnerable [01:05:00] position.

You have to stay focused. I get so focused on these jobs, I think about them in the morning on the way to work, I think about them when I am up, I think about them late at night. I am four people at ten o'clock at night and ask, and these guys take the calls and they call you back. They will call you at ten o'clock. "I am looking at something here Billy, what do you think?" It is important to have that communication, it is important to call the manufacturer, all of these places, but it is important to be focused on it. Pay attention. Pay attention to what the guy is saying to you. Sometimes [01:05:30] you get a hold of a guy and it sounds like he doesn't know what he is talking about, he has got a casual way of speaking and maybe you want to hear some more engineer talk. No pay attention.

These guys have got knowledge and you can't turn your back on that. Maybe you can disregard stuff when you have proven it and you build your own wealth of knowledge, but pay attention. Just pay attention. So often I get guys who want to be testers, they say they want to be testers, but they are not really paying attention and I feel myself teaching them the same lessons over and over and over [01:06:00] again. That is not the way I want to do it and I know they are not paying attention, I know they are just doing the bare minimum. It is tough.

I want everybody to be out of their mind committed to it, it is never going to be like that, I know. I am just kidding myself, but you got to be focused, you got the pay attention, you got to do the research, do the work. It is no good just to be able to do something, you got to know why you are doing it and what the outcome is. [01:06:30] That foundation is so much. I don't know if that made any sense.

Jaime: I got one more question for you, what inspires you?

William: I don't know. What inspires me? You know what is really nice? I want to make my parents proud all the time. I love my mom and my dad and my mom is still with me. If I was serial killer, my mom would be proud of me, she is a little biased. "My son, he is the best serial killer ever." She [01:07:00] would still be proud of me. I like ... I really like the satisfaction of solving the problem and I like being the man. It might be a little arrogant, it might be a little conceited, but I like being the man. People are like, "Yeah, you need to get Billy Ward down here."

I got a guy in my company, Harry Johnson. Harry Johnson is the man. I probably won't be the man. Nobody is looking for Robin when Batman is in the room. That is what I always say to Harry. "Harry is Batman. I might be Robin, but Harry is still Batman." It is nice being the man, it is nice being in that conversation, and [01:07:30] people say, "This guy has achieved a certain level that made me want to talk to him." I get calls from contractors and guys ... I got calls today from Sal and [inaudible 01:07:38]. Sal is my age, he has been business 30 years, he is a smart guy, but he wanted to touch base and talk about something before he did it.

I love that, man. I love that people would think that I got something to give them. I also ... Solving that problem, chasing that problem down is the best thing in the world. People got a problem and there is 20 smart guys in a room and they have been working on it all night [01:08:00] and you come in you can figure it out. Man, that sure is nice, that is a good feeling. It is like hitting a double in the ninth inning, or turning the corner and making that touchdown. You know what I mean? It is, that exactly it. It is clutch. That is the best way to put it. I like coming through in a clutch. That is probably it.

Jaime: Is there anything you want to add?

William: I love Local 3, I love being in this business, I love the people I meet. We didn't get to talk about the different things in our union, like the ski club and things [01:08:30] like that where you build the camaraderie, and you meet people who have ... "I have never been on a job with you. I have never been on a job with you. I know your friend is a snowboarder." It is fantastic, it is the best stuff. You get these bonds that are so outside of work and then you are on a job and you are like, "Wait, I know you. We were in Italy together, we went down that hill. Remember when we went to that restaurant, we were in that bar? Remember that waitress?" These little stories that totally unrelated to the business, that is fantastic.

I don't know if you get that if you don't [01:09:00] have the union. Maybe I could be in a ski club in my neighborhood and something else here, but brotherhood, sisterhood, that goes a long way. It really is a special kind of bond there. I like that sort of thing, I like going to these street fairs and stuff like that and Labor Day parade and all that stuff. Weekends at Santorini, which I think is a fantastic thing, the cultural center outside. I like going to those classes, and you get a topic and can put people in groups, and you get to talk about it. [01:09:30] We are not the kind of people who do that, you got to force electricians into that.

They will sit in a shanty and talk about sports all day, but you get five guys over here talking about basketball and the five guys over here talking about hockey, sometimes they don't even cross paths, but I like when we have that educational, cultural center outside and you are there for a retreat, and they have this guided curriculum on a Saturday and they break you up into groups, and you got to mix it up. Now people who are reticent to talk now open up about a certain topic, be it immigration [01:10:00] or tax reform or whatever it is.

They always have a good ... That guy Arthur, he does a great job out there. It is fantastic to get involved with that, and I love that. I love mixing it up like that. Giving my little talk

in front of the class, blah, blah, blah. I love that nonsense. It is fun, and you got to force guys out of their comfort zone, otherwise they are just going to talk about how they are going to redo their kitchen, what kind of car they are going to buy, how much their wife is bothering them, that kind of thing.

I might [01:10:30] get in on another home run, he is on the traveling team, that kind of stuff. Same six to seven topics. I like when people are into the real stuff, and they get a little mixing it up. I like that stuff. I love Local 3, it has been fantastic for me. It gives you ... A lot of people say that Local 3 gave me everything I have, I don't feel that way. Local 3 gave me one thing, gave me an opportunity. Give me an opportunity to be Billy Ward, like the Billy Ward I didn't know who I was when I was 20 years old. It turned out all right, I feel pretty happy [01:11:00] with who I am. Everything worked out right. Yeah, I wake up pretty good. I go to sleep at night and I wake up energized. It is good.

Jaime: [inaudible 01:11:10]

William: I am proud of you my man, this is fantastic what you are doing, this is beautiful.

Jaime: Thank you for ... I think I have a lot more than ...

William: Sorry.

Jaime: No, it is great.

William: You can't keep me down, you can't keep me down to an hour, man.

How did we do?



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